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E.O. 12065: RDS-1 03/12/11 (BARBOUR, ROBERT E.) OR-M
TAGS: PINT, PINS, PEPR, SP, US
SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTRY CITES COUP PROBLEM AS
- NEED FOR SECRETARY'S VISIT

REF: MADRID 3027

1. [REDACTED] ENTIRE TEXT.

2. I MET URGENTLY THIS EVENING AT HIS REQUEST WITH FOREIGN AFFAIRS UNDER SECRETARY ORTEGA. THE SUBJECT WAS THE CONTINUING PRESS STIR OVER THE SECRETARY'S CAUTIOUS REMARKS ON FEBRUARY 23 AND THE NEED FOR A SPECIAL GESTURE OF SUPPORT. SPEAKING FOR THE FOREIGN MINISTER, ORTEGA THEREFORE HOPED VERY MUCH THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR THE SECRETARY TO ACCEPT THE INVITATION EXTENDED MARCH 10. END SUMMARY.

3. UNDER SECRETARY ORTEGA SAID THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT WAS IN A VERY DIFFICULT SITUATION CREATED BY THE SECRETARY'S "UNHAPPY WORDS" OF FEBRUARY 23, WHEN, ACCORDING TO ORTEGA, HIS DESCRIPTION OF THE CRISIS THEN IN COURSE AS A "MERE INTERNAL AFFAIR" GAVE THE IMPRESSION OF DISINTEREST IN SPANISH DEMOCRACY. THIS IMPRESSION WAS STILL ALIVE IN THE SPANISH MEDIA AND, IN FACT, WAS

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GROWING. PEOPLE WERE ASKING WHAT LAY BEHIND THIS SEEMING DISINTEREST? DID THE AMERICANS HAVE ADVANCE INFORMATION AND WERE THEY WAITING TO SEE HOW THE COUP ATTEMPT CAME OUT, BECAUSE, AS HISTORY SHOWED, WE COULD LIVE AS WELL WITH AN AUTHORITATIVE REGIME AS WITH A DEMOCRACY?

4. ORTEGA SAID THESE WERE NOT THE OPINIONS OF THE MINISTRY, BUT THEIR EXISTENCE WAS GIVING THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT SERIOUS PROBLEMS. HE FEARED THAT IF THEY WERE NOT DEALT WITH, THEY COULD LEAD TO PROBLEMS IN OUR RELATIONS, IN WHICH CASE IT WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE TO RETURN TO THE "GOOD DAYS BEFORE FEBRUARY 23." ORTEGA SAID THAT FAR FROM EASING THE PROBLEM WAS GETTING WORSE.

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HE REFERRED TO AN ARTICLE IN THE MARCH 13 NYT BY ITS LOCAL CORRESPONDENT AS AN EXAMPLE. THE SUBJECT HAD COME UP IN LONDON DURING PSOE LEADER GONZALEZ'S JUST CONCLUDED VISIT THERE (I SAID I THOUGHT GONZALEZ'S REMARKS WERE CHILDISH). NONETHELESS, ORTEGA CONTINUED: THEY WERE INDICATIVE OF THE GENERAL ATTITUDE.

5. GESTURING TOWARD THE COLLECTION OF AMERICAN LETTERS AND STATEMENTS AND THE CONGRESSIONAL RESOLUTION ON THE TABLE BEFORE HIM, ORTEGA SAID NONE OF THEM COMPENSATED FOR THE HARM WHICH HAD BEEN DONE. ALL HAD A RING OF OFFICIALNESS; THEY DID NOT CONVINCED (I INTERJECTED THAT HE COULD NOT EXPECT US TO SHARE THAT OPINION). ORTEGA SAID THE MESSAGES AND LETTERS WERE ALL WELCOME, BUT THEY DID NOT DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM BY SHOWING ANY SPECIAL CONCERN OR SUPPORT.

6. ORTEGA CONTINUED THAT THE MINISTER WOULD BE GOING TO BRUSSELS ON MARCH 16 AND WOULD HAVE A PRESS CONFERENCE THERE. HE WOULD BE ASKED ABOUT "THE AMERICAN ATTITUDE,"

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AND ORTEGA DID NOT KNOW HOW PEREZ-LLORCA WOULD BE ABLE TO ANSWER IT. CONSEQUENTLY, ORTEGA SAID HE HAD BEEN ASKED BY THE MINISTER TO EXPRESS HIS PREOCCUPATION AT THE SITUATION THAT HAD BEEN CREATED AND TO ASK THAT I REPORT IT TO WASHINGTON IN THE HOPE THAT WE WOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE THE SPECIAL GESTURE WHICH THEY BELIEVED THE SITUATION CALLED FOR (I.E., A VISIT BY THE SECRETARY).

7. I SAID THAT I WOULD OF COURSE DO SO, BUT, SPEAKING PURELY PERSONALLY, I DID NOT HAVE MUCH SYMPATHY FOR THE POSITION HE HAD EXPRESSED. I SAW NO NEED FOR US TO FEEL DEFENSIVE ABOUT THE STAND WE HAD TAKEN IN CONNECTION WITH THE FEBRUARY 23 COUP ATTEMPT (THE DETAILS OF WHICH STAND I REVIEWED), AND, IF ANYTHING, I FELT THAT WE WERE THE INJURED PARTY VIS-A-VIS THE SPANISH MEDIA. WHAT LAY BEHIND THE SECRETARY'S REMARKS ON FEBRUARY 23 WAS A NEED TO BE CAUTIOUS REGARDING A SITUATION THAT NEITHER WE NOR ANYONE ELSE AT THAT TIME UNDERSTOOD (ORTEGA SAID FRANCOIS PONCET HAD BEEN LESS RESERVED). THE SPANISH MEDIA HAD CHOSEN TO EXPLOIT THE SECRETARY'S REMARKS FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES, WHICH WERE THOSE OF THE LEFT AND THE FAR RIGHT. REFERRING TO THE AMBASSADOR'S RECENT LETTER TO A SOCIALIST LEADER, I SAID I WAS ASTONISHED THAT AFTER FIVE YEARS OF OUR ACTIVE AND OPEN SUPPORT FOR SPANISH DEMOCRACY, ANY HONEST PERSON COULD QUESTION WHERE WE STOOD ON THAT MATTER. WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF THE SECRETARY OF STATE HAD COME FORWARD IN THOSE EARLY MOMENTS WITH A FULSOME COMMENT? WOULD WE NOT HAVE HAD THE SAME MEDIA WONDERING WHY HE WAS SO WELL PREPARED?

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8. AS FOR WHAT TO DO ABOUT THE PROBLEM, I THOUGHT THE GOS COULD TRY TO DO SOMETHING. THE FOREIGN MINISTER COULD ANSWER THE SECRETARY'S LETTER WITH AN EXPRESSION OF GRATIFICATION AT OUR SUPPORT, AND THE LETTER COULD BE RELEASED. I THOUGHT SUCH A LETTER WAS CALLED FOR, ANYWAY. OR, IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE IN BRUSSELS, PEREZ-LLORCA COULD ANSWER THE ANTICIPATED QUESTION IN THIS SAME VEIN. OR, HE COULD SAY THAT HE COULD NOT SPEAK FOR THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND THEY SHOULD ASK US DIRECTLY. I TOLD ORTEGA THAT I REALIZED THE PURPOSE OF HIS DEMARCHE WAS TO EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF AN EARLY VISIT BY THE SECRETARY AND WAS, THEREFORE, A GESTURE OF FRIENDSHIP, BUT I DID NOT THINK THE PROBLEM HE DESCRIBED A VERY GOOD FRAMEWORK FOR SUCH A VISIT. THERE WAS NO REASON FOR THE SECRETARY TO COME HERE AS A PENITENT, AS THOUGH HE HAD DONE SOMETHING WRONG. IF THE SECRETARY WERE ABLE TO COME, AS WE ALL HOPED, IT WOULD BE INCUMBENT ON THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT TO SEE THAT THE PROPER ATMOSPHERE EXISTED WITH REGARD TO THIS MATTER. IT WOULD ALSO BE NECESSARY TO LIMIT THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE PRESS COULD DESCRIBE THE VISIT AS "PRESSURE ON SPAIN TO JOIN NATO."

9. ORTEGA SAID THERE WAS NO DESIRE AT ALL FOR A "TRIP TO CANOSSA." HIS SOLE PURPOSE HAD BEEN TO EMPHASIZE

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THAT HIS GOVERNMENT FELT IT HAD A STRONG AND WARM RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES. IT WANTED TO SHOW THAT THIS WAS SO BY A "SPECIAL GESTURE." THE PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER HAD MANY IMPORTANT THINGS TO TALK TO THE SECRETARY ABOUT. BEGINNING WITH NATO

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AND OUR TREATY, AND IT WAS THE URGENCY THAT LAY IN THESE PROBLEMS THAT CAUSED THEM TO ASK FOR AN EARLY MEETING IN MADRID. ORTEGA HOPED THAT HIS REPRESENTATION WOULD BE SEEN IN THAT LIGHT AND IN THE UNHAPPY LIGHT OF THE SITUATION HE HAD DESCRIBED. SPAIN WANTED ITS SPECIAL FRIENDSHIP EMPHASIZED. OTHER GOVERNMENTS HAD ACTED MORE QUICKLY AND MORE POINTEDLY (EVEN THE FRENCH, HE SAID), AND THEY WANTED THE UNITED STATES TO BE SEEN AS AHEAD OF THEM ALL. THAT WAS THE REASON FOR SPANISH DISCOMFORT AND UNHAPPINESS, AND THAT WAS WHY THEY HOPED VERY MUCH THAT IN AWARENESS OF THIS PROBLEM, THE SECRETARY WOULD MAKE A SPECIAL EFFORT TO COME HERE.

10. COMMENT: ORTEGA CHOSE TO SPEAK IN ENGLISH, WHICH INSTEAD OF SOFTENING HIS REMARKS, MADE THEM MORE DIRECT. ASIDE FROM UNHAPPINESS AT WHAT HE REFERRED TO AS "TOO MUCH CAUTION," WHAT CAME THROUGH WAS GENUINE ANXIETY AT AN UNEXPECTED OFFSHOOT OF THEIR SERIOUS CRISIS, LEADING, THROUGH NO FAULT OF THEIR OWN, TO PROBLEMS WITH US. THEY ARE AT A LOSS TO DEAL WITH THE UNLEASHED AND IRRESPONSIBLE MEDIA (LATEST PRESS INQUIRY: HAVE YOU PROTESTED THE USE OF AMERICAN TANKS IN VALENCIA BY MILANS DEL BOSCH), AND DESPITE THE SOMETIMES UNFORTUNATE CHOICE OF WORDS, ORTEGA WAS REALLY APPEALING TO THE SECRETARY TO COME HERE AND HELP THEM WITH THEIR MOST PRESSING PROBLEMS -- SUPPORTING SPAIN'S DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS, STRENGTHENING AND RENEWING OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP AND COUNSELING THEM ON NATO.

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